

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DPW-01 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-20 RSC-01

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 PRS-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00

INRE-00 DRC-01 /073 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 7539

SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

INFO USIA WASHDC

CINCPAC

COMUSMACTHAI

USSAG/7AF NKP

JCRC NKP

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 16346

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, TH

SUBJ: PRESS COVERAGE OF LEAGUE OF FAMILIES VISIT TO JCRC

1. ABOUT 10 DAYS AGO, IN RESPONSE TO A SPECIFIC REQUEST BY CBS NEWS TO COVER THE LEAGUE OF FAMILIES' PLANNED VISIT TO JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER, THE EMBASSY ASKED THE RTG FOR PERMISSION FOR A MEDIA VISIT TO NKP ON OCTOBER 19 OR 20, WHICHEVER DAY THE LEAGUE WENT. THE REQUEST WAS FOR A GROUP VISIT, SINCE MANY OTHER NEWS ORGANIZATIONS HAD LONG-STANDING REQUESTS TO VISIT JCRC. SINCE THEN, THE AP HAS ALSO ASKED TO COVER THE LEAGUE'S VISIT TO JCRC.

2. AFTER THE POLITICAL TURMOIL OF THE LAST WEEKS, IT WAS GENERALLY EXPECTED THAT THE RTG WOULD TURN DOWN THE REQUEST. ON OCTOBER 17, HOWEVER, THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF INFORMATION FOR THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TOLD US BY TELEPHONE THAT THE PROPOSED MEDIA VISIT TO COVER THE LEAGUE'S VISIT HAD THE MFA'S BLESSINGS AND THAT IT ONLY REMAINED TO GET APPROVAL FROM SUPREME COMMAND
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HEADQUARTERS, FORWARD. HE SAID THERE SHOULD BE LITTLE

DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING THIS. HE COULD BE RIGHT OR WRONG ABOUT THIS, WE DO NOT YET KNOW. IN ANY EVENT, CBS ARE AWARE THAT THE MFA HAS SAID THIS, AND PERHAPS OTHERS KNOW IT AS WELL.

3. NOW WE ARE TOLD THAT DOD WILL NOT PERMIT NEWSMEN TO COVER THE LEAGUE'S VISIT, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE WELCOME TO VISIT JCRC SOME OTHER DAY. THE REASONS GIVEN BY CINCPAC PAO LNO ARE:

QUOTE

(A) DOD WOULD, IN FACT, BE HELPING TO PROVIDE A PUBLIC SOUNDING BOARD FOR A GROUP WHOSE ACTIVITIES MAY BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE TO THE JCRC ENTORT:

(B) THE PRINCIPAL NEWS STORY TO EMERGE WOULD BE THAT OF THE LEAGUE OF FAMILIES; I.E., GOALS, BELIEFS, ACTIVITIES, ETC., RATHER THAN THE "REAL-WORLD" ACTIVITIES OF THE JCRC. PRESS AND JCRC WOULD BEST BE SERVED BY A PRESS VISIT SEPARATE AND APART FROM LEAGUE OF FAMILIES VISIT;

(C) SINCE MILITARY AIRLIFT IS BEING PROVIDED FOR LEAGUE OF FAMILIES, PRESS WOULD EXPECT TO BE PROVIDED AIRLIFT. UNQUOTE.

4. WHAT IS REALLY INVOLVED HERE IS THAT BY TURNING DOWN THIS PRESS VISIT WE ARE DOING JUST WHAT THE NEWSMEN ALWAYS CLAIM SO BITTERLY; THAT IS, USING THE QUESTION OF ACCESS TO THESE BASES IN A CYNICAL WAY TO STIFLE CRITICAL ("COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE") STORIES. THEY ARE PARTICULARLY CYNICAL ABOUT OUR CLAIMS THAT IT IS ROYAL RTG THAT IS STANDING IN THE WAY OF MEDIA VISITS TO ROYAL THAI BASES. IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO COUNTER THIS ARGUMENT ONCE THEY LEARN THAT THE RTG HAS APPROVED COVERAGE OF THE LEAGUE'S VISIT (IF THEY DO INDEED GRANT APPROVAL) ONLY TO HAVE DOD TURN IT DOWN BECAUSE IT WOULD BE "COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE."

5. SINCE DOD HAD PREVIOUSLY APPROVED VISITS TO JCRC
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AT NKP, EMBASSY HAD NOT ANTICIPATED DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING PENTAGON OKAY FOR COVERAGE LEAGUE VISIT. WE BELIEVE EXCLUDING CBS TEAM WHICH HAS FOLLOWED GROUP THROUGH SEA FROM VISITING NKP WILL STIR UP ADVERSE REACTION FROM WORKING PRESS. FROM CONTACT WITH LEAGUE VISITORS, WE DO NOT EXPECT THEY WOULD USE OCCASION TO STEAL THE HEADLINES FROM JCRC, WHILE HUMAN INTEREST ANGLES SHOULD PRODUCE READABLE STORIES. FURTHERMORE, DENIAL OF

PERMISSION BY US IF RTG APPROVES PUTS US IN UNTENABLE
POSITION.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY REQUESTS DOD REEXAMINE
LEAGUE VISIT TO NKP AND PROVIDE NECESSARY AUTHORIZATION
BY OPENING OF BUSINESS FRIDAY OCT 19 BANGKOK TIME TO
ALLOW TIME FOR NEWSMEN TO MAKE INDIVIDUAL TRAVEL
ARRANGEMENTS.
UNGER

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